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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Association of Migrating Waders.—Mention of collecting a male and female of the Baird Sandpiper by L. E. Wyman in the July-August CONDOR (p. 172), calls to mind observations made by myself on migrating shore birds on the Atlantic coast during recent seasons. It was early noticed that the first birds to come south in the fall as well as the late ones travelling north in the spring, were very often seen two together. At times they appeared to be male and female, which is quite possible to determine in some species without taking specimens, the female being so much larger and longer billed. At other times they looked just alike. At first I took it for granted that these birds were mated pairs, but more recently I have come to have little confidence in that hypothesis. Too often have a couple of boon companions, separated from the crowd and evidently counting a good deal on one another's society, been of different species, a Least and a Semipalmated Sandpiper or even a Ringneck Plover and one of the smaller species. It also appears that three birds travel in company as often as two, perhaps more often in the late summer, and my belief is that these associations are, in general, purely platonic. We know that there are times when we prefer to travel with one or two chosen companions rather than with a crowd, and the more I see of them the more comparable to our own the social instincts of the shore birds appear. This point of view does not rest on sufficiently definite data to be called a scientific observation, but nevertheless I would like to present it for consideration.—JOHN T. NICHOLS, *New York City, August 15, 1919.*

White-throated Swift in Contra Costa County.—On the left hand side of Pine Canyon, Contra Costa County, about a mile above Ford's Ranch, which is at the entrance to the canyon, are some large rocks containing various ledges and cracks. While passing through the canyon on July 5, 1919, I noticed several White-throated Swifts (*Aeronautes melanoleucus*) sailing about these rocks. I therefore climbed up to see if their nesting site was accessible.

I managed, with stocking feet and small finger holds, to climb up the face of the rock to an almost inaccessible place, where two big rocks come together. In this crack was an unoccupied nest situated on a small wedged-in stone. Four feet above this nest was another which was occupied, as the old bird was flushed. While trying to decide which was the best way to reach this nest, the old bird came back at full speed and swooped up to it almost hitting me in the face. This proves that they do not always slow down in their speed when entering the nest.

After some delicate climbing and balancing, the nest was reached and found to be empty. But right above it, in a small crack, were two young birds almost ready to fly. After trying to poke them down with a small stick I had to give it up as the little birds squeezed farther in the crack. There were more nests elsewhere in the rocks, as about thirty birds were observed sailing back and forth over the canyon.—LUTHER LITTLE, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, California, August 26, 1919.*

Luck.—If the writer had not been possessed of a certain amount of this "article" these notes would not have been written. Briefly told the facts are these.

A certain pair of Nuttall Woodpeckers (*Dryobates nuttalli*) chose a partly decayed fence post for a building site. The same location had been selected by a family of bumble-bees. The woodpeckers started near the top of the post and drilled their excavation downward, while the bees started some two feet below and burrowed upward. The two openings met and the woodpecker remained in possession.

It so happened that Mrs. Woodpecker laid a runt egg which promptly slipped into the trap nest provided by the bumble-bee, and at the time the writer examined the post the small end of the woodpecker egg was protruding from the opening of the bumble-bee excavation, fully a foot below the bottom of the woodpecker's nest. In the woodpecker's dug-out were four normal eggs.

If the runt had been slightly smaller, if the bumble-bee hole had been slightly larger, or if the egg had lodged or broken in its winding journey through the tunnel of

the bee, this tale would not have been written, and the writer would have been short an interesting nest and set of eggs of the Nuttall Woodpecker.—N. K. CARPENTER, *Escondido, California, September 15, 1919.*

Second Occurrence of the Painted Bunting at Solomon, Saline County, Kansas.—A record of the nesting of the Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) near Solomon, Kansas, was given in THE CONDOR, for September, 1918. This year, 1919, I again saw one of the birds near the place where the nest and female were found last year. On June 30, 1919, a male was seen, and it was encountered a second time two days later. I am inclined to think the bird is of more than accidental occurrence in that part of the state and am strengthened in this belief by having seen three males near Chanute, Neosho County. One was seen July 23 and several times later until July 27, a second July 25, and a third July 27, each in a different locality, and several miles apart. I did not look for nests but think it likely that they could have been found, judging from the date of the 1918 nest (June 10) at Solomon. On August 8 still another male was seen just north of Altoona, Wilson County. From these records it would seem that the species occurs regularly farther north than was thought to be the case, or else, what is, perhaps, more likely, its range is being extended northward, possibly from an increase in numbers due to protection. Other Kansas observers may be able to add to our records of the bird.—A. J. KIRN, *Neodesha, Kansas, August 16, 1919.*

A Western Yellowthroat on the University of California Campus.—While working in the gallery of the M. V. Z., on the morning of May 21, 1919, my attention was attracted by a bird-song never before heard by me on or near the Campus. It was faint and directionless through the walls, but I caught enough of it to be keen for an investigation. With the help of Miss Margaret Wythe, I listened from windows on various sides of the building—without, however, hearing the song. The moment I returned to work, I heard it, as faint and directionless as before. Another investigation followed, and another return to work, and so on for half an hour, till I began to imagine that the ghost of a bird's voice was trying to get my ornithological goat, as one might say. But at last, as I listened from an office window, a single clear and near example of the song reached my ears. It was an utterance in four sections, the first three being four-syllabled and exactly alike: *pritisitta, pritisitta, pritisitta, prit*, with accent on the "prit". I had never heard a Yellowthroat song of this exact syllabification, but the chief and important distinguishing character of the song of the species is, after all, its exact repetition of some sort of a two- or three- or four-syllabled "word". Every individual Yellowthroat has quite a stock of different "words", and some are likely to be different from any "words" one would hear another individual sing. Timbre, to be sure, is also a character of the Yellowthroat song—though it varies among and in individuals as widely as does "word"-form. The timbre of this song was hardly typical: it was unusually loose and liquid. The utterance was comparatively slow. Outside the building I found Dr. H. C. Bryant under a bay tree trying to get a look at the singer. He looked as puzzled as I had felt in the gallery. The bird would not show itself except as some sort of a restless flitting warbler with yellow on it somewhere. It went from tree to tree within a limited area round the Museum, returning again and again to trees already visited. It foraged mostly in the bay and pepper trees, but once flew to the top of a large live oak opposite Dr. Grinnell's office window (a favorite place, by the way, for rare visitants to the Campus). We finally decided, in despair, to enlist the services of our doughty field-collector, H. G. White, who soon settled the question by "collecting" the bird. It proved to be a Western Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas occidentalis*)—another new record for the Campus, and one representing a race of Yellowthroat non-resident, and rare even as a transient, in the San Francisco Bay region. It is of interest to note that the bird was foraging exclusively in the high dry tree-tops—whereas one might rather have expected to find it fifty yards away in the tangle of vines and bushes along Strawberry Creek.—RICHARD HUNT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, August 1, 1919.*

Evidence as to the Food of the Wood Ibis.—The Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*), one of the rarer birds of our state, has long been noted as a bird of peculiar feeding habits. The account given by Audubon and cited by Coues in his "Birds of the Northwest"

(p. 515) will furnish a description of the method by which this bird extracts the food material from the bottom of ponds and rivers and from the muddy water. Analysis of the stomach of a specimen secured at Palo Verde, Imperial County, September 4, 1916, and contained in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, shows the following food elements:

- 10 seeds of the screw bean (*Strombocarpus pubescens*)
- 2 seeds mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*)
- Parts of 4 water beetles (*Cybister* sp.)
- Finely comminuted vegetable material.

The seeds were identified by W. L. McAtee and the beetles by E. C. Van Dyke.

This food material is exactly what we might expect to find in the shallow water of the Colorado River. It is of interest that a bird with so large a bill, and with the bill lacking the sieve-like apparatus of a duck's bill, can be so adept at sifting small particles from the water.—HAROLD C. BRYANT, *Berkeley, California, July 1, 1919.*

The Occurrence of the Long-billed Curlew in Northwestern California.—In commenting upon "The Game Birds of California" recently, Mr. H. E. Wilder brought to my attention some facts known to him, but not heretofore published, relative to the occurrence of the Long-billed Curlew along the northwestern California coast. Mr. Wilder has generously urged me to put these facts on record, and furthermore has presented to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology a specimen of the bird, taken at the mouth of the Eel River, Humboldt County, July 18, 1916. This bird (now no. 30708, Mus. Vert. Zool.) was secured for Mr. Wilder by Mr. Jack Kemp, of Ferndale, and this latter gentleman states that he has shot many of the same species. District Attorney A. W. Hill of Eureka, who spent his early years on the shores of Humboldt Bay, told Mr. Wilder that he had shot many of these curlew there. He said they often came early in the fall before the ducks had appeared. In October, 1918, he saw a flock of seven at the mouth of Eel River.

Later, Mr. Wilder interviewed Mr. Frank Williams of the Russ-Williams Bank of Ferndale, who has spent much time hunting ducks and fishing for salmon along the lower Eel River. Mr. Williams stated that curlew have always been rather common though irregular visitors to that section. He said they usually occur in early fall, and commonly in small flocks; but at one time some years ago they came in great numbers, numerous flocks of 200 or more each being present.

As to subspecies, the bird sent to this Museum by Mr. Wilder falls under the name *Numenius americanus occidentalis*, the Lesser Long-billed Curlew—this on the basis of measurements in comparison with the averages and extremes given by Oberholser (Auk, xxxv, 1918, pp. 189, 193) and by Ridgway (Bds. N. and Mid. Amer., pt. viii, 1919, pp. 391, 394). The bird in question (no. 30708, Mus. Vert. Zool.) is marked "♀", but is so very small for this sex, even in *occidentalis*, that one is tempted to think it more likely a male. It measures, in millimeters: Wing 273; tail 99; exposed culmen 117; tarsus 85.

Of course one example is insufficient evidence that all the curlew visiting the Humboldt Bay region are the Lesser. Further specimens are needed. In west-central California, the larger, Eastern Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus americanus*) is the predominant race during the fall migration, as shown by the considerable number of specimens at hand.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, August 24, 1919.*

Additional Notes and Records from Colorado.—Since the publication in the Auk (xxxv, 1918, p. 236) of "Notes on Some Species New to the Colorado List of Birds", the following occurrences have been brought to light, which supplement those referred to. All specimens upon which they are based are in the collections of the Colorado Museum of Natural History.

Gavia pacifica. The Colorado record of this species is based upon an immature female (C. M. N. H. no. 7003) from the Edwin Carter collection, taken in the vicinity of Breckenridge, Colo., Nov. 15th, 1887. I am indebted to Mr. A. C. Bent of Taunton, Mass., for assistance in making the determination. In referring to the specimen, he writes, in part:—"Its measurements are rather small for this species, but not too small for a young

female; the shape of the bill, with the curving upper mandible and the angle at the gonys, together with the broad, light edgings of the feathers on the back, are distinctive of this species". He mentions this specimen in his "North American Diving Birds".

This is the first record from Colorado for this bird.

Larus californicus. It may be well at this time to correct the records of this gull credited to Colorado from the Carter collection. The specimen upon which one of the supposed occurrences was based (C. M. N. H. no. 7132), has been re-examined, and proves to be an immature Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*). It was taken near Breckenridge, Colorado, April 28, 1884. All other large gulls from this collection are either this species or the Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*), and all efforts to locate any of the other supposed specimens of *L. californicus* have been unavailing. This species should be withdrawn from the state list.

Icteria virens virens. An examination of a rather extensive series of Chats from eastern Colorado has revealed two undoubted examples of the eastern variety (C. M. N. H. nos. 2908, 4711). The first, an adult male, was taken at Holly, on the Arkansas River, within a few miles of the Kansas line, on May 24, 1913. The second, also an adult male, was secured on Dry Willow Creek, Yuma County, June 20, 1915. Others in the series are apparently intergrades, referable to either *virens* or *longicauda*, and it seems not improbable that the two subspecies mingle freely in eastern Colorado and western Kansas.

This is really a restoration of a subspecies to the Colorado list, as Baird, Brewer and Ridgway mention an example of *virens* from Colorado in their "History of North American Birds", a chat having been taken by Thomas Say near the headwaters of the Arkansas River. It is presumed that this example of *Icteria* was secured by Say when he accompanied Major Long's expedition in 1823. Prof. W. W. Cooke was perfectly justified in dropping the subspecies in 1909 (Auk, xxvi, p. 420), on the records as then known, but the bird is to be reinstated on the facts here stated.

Toxostoma longirostre sennetti. Among the unusual occurrences reported from Colorado, few are of such exceptional interest as the specimen forming the record for this southern form. This bird (C. M. N. H. no. 2359) was taken at Barr, Colorado, in May, 1906. It is an adult female and was originally classified as *Toxostoma rufum* and as such passed unnoticed in the series of that species until a recent transfer of the collections. Then its characteristics and misidentification were brought to my attention.

The specimen is typical in every respect, comparing perfectly with examples from southern Texas.—F. C. LINCOLN, *Colorado Museum of Natural History, Denver, September 22, 1919.*

California Black Rail at San Bernardino, California.—On August 3 of this year R. B. Herron, one of the oldest ornithologists in California, obtained a live specimen, an adult male, of the California Black Rail (*Creciscus coturniculus*). This fact I consider worth publishing, as, so far as I am able to ascertain, it is a new record from San Bernardino and, with one exception, a record for this portion of southern California. This bird was found in a half dazed condition by a little girl, the daughter of a neighbor of Mr. Herron in this city, and the child, thinking that it was a fledgling that had fallen from the nest, took it to Mr. Herron asking if he could not feed it until it became strong enough to care for itself. Mr. Herron kept the bird, but it died within the next twenty-four hours, when he made a skin of it, which later on he gave to me. The only other record known to me for this section is of a bird taken by Prof. L. Miller at Riverside, California, some time during the month of August, 1893.

The bird obtained by Mr. Herron was in good condition except for a slight abrasion on the head. We have concluded that it flew against an electric light or telephone wire while migrating and was so stunned by the blow that it fell to the ground.—EDWARD WALL, *San Bernardino, California, August 16, 1919.*

A Second Record of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper in the State of Washington.—The Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) is so scarce a bird on the Pacific coast as to make it seem advisable to publish records of all that we find. It therefore gives me pleasure to state that, when collecting on the Tacoma Flats on September 8, 1919, I was so fortunate as to secure two handsome males of this species. They were together

in the herbage on the bottom of a dried up pond, from which the water had long since gone. This was about a quarter of a mile from water of any kind. A careful search in different directions failed to reveal any more birds of this species, although there was a very extensive migration of land birds as well as water birds. In the stomach of one was the assembled remains of a good sized grasshopper, carefully dismembered, and I was surprised to find that even the coarse, prickly hind legs had been eaten whole.

On the same day I walked up to within twenty feet of a flock of seven Pectoral Sandpipers (*Pisobia maculata*), an interesting bird on the Pacific coast, and watched them for ten minutes. They did not show the slightest fear, feeding up to within a few feet.

Another interesting specimen taken was an adult female Black Pigeon Hawk (*Falco columbarius suckleyi*), which completed my bag of three birds for the day.—J. HOOPER BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington, September 11, 1919.*

One Reason for Eliminating Subspecies.—In the recent discussion in the CONDOR on the multiplication of subspecies no one has put forward a reason against them quite so final as that quoted by Prof. F. W. Oliver in his life of Arthur Henfrey (*Makers of British Botany*). Of this great exponent of the 'New Botany' Prof. Oliver says (p. 201): "He more than once expresses the opinion that there was too great a tendency to lump species in the handbooks to the Flora, and he urged on the occasion of the preparation of the third edition of the *London Catalogue of British Plants* that many more forms should find recognition. The editors of the catalogue however successfully opposed the suggestion on the ingenious grounds that it would raise the weight for postage beyond the limits of a blue (twopenny) stamp."—J. H. FLEMING, *Toronto, Ontario, September 4, 1919.*

A Tradition Nearly Broken.—The discovery was made on the fourth of July, 1919. The writer in company with B. P. Carpenter and friends was searching for oological treasure on a small rocky island of the Coronados group off the coast of Lower California.

A number of petrel nests had been unearthed, each of which contained the traditional single egg or young. But in nearly every colony of nesting birds one finds something unusual and this community proved to be no exception. An egg of the Socorro Petrel (*Oceanodroma socorroensis*) was removed from beneath the parent bird which was of unusual dimensions, measuring 1.50x1.12 inches, whereas a normal egg measures but 1.10x.85 inches. Upon blowing the specimen it proved to be fresh, and contained two yolks. Did not this bird have a set of two eggs started, and did not nature rather than have so time honored a custom broken provide but the one shell?—N. K. CARPENTER, HOOPER BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington, September 11, 1919.*

Some Southern Records of the Horned Puffin.—Judging by the take of specimens the Horned Puffin (*Fratercula corniculata*) has been but a rare visitant along our coast. That this species may at certain times occur in considerable numbers appears to be evidenced by the note in the May-June CONDOR (p. 128) by Franklin J. Smith, and by the following additional records.

Mr. Wm. C. Bohrmann of San Francisco recently presented to the writer a splendid photograph of a Horned Puffin taken at Mussel Rock, March 2, 1919. The bird was found on the ocean beach still alive, but unable to fly. Quoting from a letter: "I carried this bird in my pocket for a mile or so toward the Cliff House. Had figured that some night-prowling raccoon would get him if I left him on the beach. But he looked so miserably unhappy that I finally decided to give him his small chance for life, and I let him go."

Richard Hocking has furnished material for the following note: Mrs. A. S. Allen and Richard Hocking of Berkeley went to Montara Beach on May 24, 1919, to look for some dead birds seen in the same place a week before. Here were found eight Tufted Puf-

fins, two Horned Puffins, two California Murres and one Cormorant. These birds were scattered in the drift wood and had evidently been killed by oil. One Horned Puffin brought back is now skeleton no. 30714 in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. On May 17, 1919, Mrs. Hocking obtained a Horned Puffin at Coast Ways, near Pescadero, which is now specimen no. 30713 in the Museum.—HAROLD C. BRYANT, *Berkeley, California, June 26, 1919.*

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Criticism has come to the Editor of THE CONDOR either directly or, more often, through indirect channels relative to the kinds of articles being published. Such criticism is various, to the effect that our magazine should publish proportionately more local lists, or fewer local lists; more reviews or no reviews at all; more life history accounts; etc., etc. Here is one determining factor, taking into consideration the volume for 1919, which concludes with this issue: We have put out just as many pages (252) as the money available pays for, this being determined by very close calculation on the part of our Business Managers. Now, as furnishing data to govern the Editor in the future, he hereby requests such of our readers as are sincerely concerned for the welfare of THE CONDOR to look over volume XXI critically and to write to him frankly as follows: What class of articles appeared to you as most worth publishing? What class of contributions—reviews, minutes, communications, lists, autobiographies—might have been left out altogether, their place being taken by other, more worthy, matter? What were the best kinds of illustrations, and what others might well have been omitted? The status of the annual roster was settled by vote of the Club early in the present year—and favorably to the continuance of that feature. Now the Editor invites views in regard to the further policy of THE CONDOR as outlined above. We cannot publish any greater amount of material with the limited funds in hand; but we *can* change the *kind* of matter printed to some degree, although limited always by the kind and amount furnished by our contributors. *What are your ideas?*

As regards the splitting of genera, in other words, the determination of the limits of any genus, we would call the attention of our readers to the article in the October (1919) *Auk*, by Mr. Ned Hollister, entitled "The systematic position of the Ring-necked Duck". Mr. Hollister's conclusions in regard to the constitution of the Genus *Marila* are certainly based on a sound and clearly set forth line of reasoning. It will be remembered that it has been recently proposed to set off the Canvasback in one genus, the Redhead in another, and the Scaups in a third! Hollister's careful study of the facts, and of the other considerations involved,

shows that *Marila* as it now stands should be "left without any subdivision at all"—with which conclusion we heartily concur.

The current tendency in some quarters toward the suppression of the private collector seems to have gone to great lengths in Minnesota. In Dr. T. S. Roberts' useful and attractive handbook entitled "A review of the ornithology of Minnesota" (May, 1919) we find a statement in the "Addendum" to the effect that permits to collect birds, nests and eggs for scientific purposes are in that state to be issued *only* to public institutions that maintain zoological collections. Dr. Roberts points out that this attitude is directly opposite to that taken by the Federal government and that the effect will be directly toward discouraging interest in ornithology and will eventually lead to a dearth of trained ornithologists. We entirely agree with the stand which he takes.

Mr. George Willett has established himself and family for the winter at Craig, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. He has arranged to devote practically his entire time to ornithology, and since he is, as far as we know, the first active bird student to winter in southeastern Alaska we may expect valuable results in the way of new facts concerning the seasonal behavior of the birds there. Practically nothing is now known, for instance, in regard to the route of migration of many of the birds which summer in western Alaska and which winter in California. Whether or not they follow the coast line closely, traversing the outer of the coastal islands, or whether they pursue an off-shore route more or less distant from the land, remains to be proved. Mr. Willett's findings will doubtless bear importantly upon this problem.

The Thirty-seventh Stated Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union was held in New York City, November 11 to 14. Fellows elected were Alexander Wetmore and Joseph H. Riley; Henry W. Henshaw became a Retired Fellow. The only Western Fellow in attendance was Harry S. Swarth, representing the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

Four months of biological field work has been carried forward in the State of Wash-